

IN THE CLAIMS

1-49. (cancelled)

50. (Currently Amended) A method for detecting and classifying anomalies of a surface of a sample of a material suitable for use as a substrate for storage, display or electronic devices,

comprising:

supplying radiation to an area of the surface;

detecting radiation from the anomalies associated with the area of the surface to provide an output corresponding to the area by means of a detector; and

analyzing the detector output for anomalies and classifying the anomalies;

wherein the analyzing uses more than one threshold to analyze the detector output and to arrive at least one classification of the anomalies, said analyzing and classifying comprising processing the output with a first threshold, and classifying the anomalies in a first classification and analyzing the output with a second threshold different from the first threshold, said classifying including applying algorithm(s) to test relationship between anomalies, if any, wherein the output is analyzed with a second threshold without applying the algorithm(s) to test relationship between anomalies.

51-52. cancelled.

53. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 52, said analyzing and classifying comprising using the first classification and the output analyzed with a second threshold to characterize anomalies in the output analyzed with a second threshold.

54. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 50, said analyzing and classifying comprising characterizing anomalies in the at least one classification as elongated anomalies, area anomalies or point anomalies.

55. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 54, wherein the elongated anomalies include macroscratches and-microscratches.

56. (Currently Amended) The method of claim ~~54~~50, wherein the first threshold is lower than the second threshold, wherein one or more anomalies are classified as scratches when they are classified as scratches at the first threshold whether or not they are classified as scratches at the second threshold.

57. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 50, wherein the analyzing is performed by means of a processing system and wherein a first threshold used in analyzing anomalies is the lowest practical threshold of the system.

58. (Currently Amended) The method of claim ~~54~~50, further comprising displaying only anomalies of sizes that result in detector outputs that exceed the second threshold.

59. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 50, further comprising displaying only anomalies of sizes that exceed a predetermined value.

60. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 50, wherein said classifying classifies the anomalies by means of their distribution over the surface.

61. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 60, wherein said classifying classifies the anomalies detected into two or more of the following three categories: elongated group of anomalies, area group of anomalies or point group of anomalies.

62. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 61, wherein the elongated group of anomalies comprise macroscratches and microscratches.

63. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 60, wherein said classifying comprises determining distances between the anomalies detected and grouping into groups the anomalies detected that are within a predetermined distance from one another.

64. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 63, wherein said classifying classifies the anomalies detected by grouping anomalies into a group only when the number of anomalies in the group exceeds a preset value.

65. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 63, wherein said determining also determines length and width of a boundary on the surface enclosing at least one group of anomalies detected, and said classifying classifies the anomalies in said at least one group as those forming an elongated group when ratio of the length to the width of the boundary exceeds a preset value, and classifies the anomalies in said at least one group as those forming an area group when ratio of the length to the width of the boundary does not exceed a preset value.

66. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 65, wherein said classifying classifies the anomalies in an elongated group as those forming a microscratch when the length of the boundary is greater than a preset value.

67. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 60, wherein said classifying classifies the anomalies in a group as point group of anomalies when the number of anomalies in the group does not exceed a preset value.

68. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 50, wherein said supplying comprises directing a beam of radiation along a direction to the surface.

69. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 68, wherein said detecting detects radiation scattered by the anomalies.

70. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 69, wherein said detecting detects radiation scattered by the anomalies along a direction away from a specular reflection direction of the beam by the surface.

71. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 50, further comprising controlling a sample processing parameter in response to the at least one classification.

72. (Currently Amended) A method for detecting and classifying anomalies of a surface of a sample of a material suitable for use as a substrate for storage, display or electronic devices, comprising:

- supplying radiation to an area of the surface;
- detecting radiation from the anomalies associated with the area of the surface to provide an output corresponding to the area by means of a detector;
- analyzing the detector output for anomalies and classifying the anomalies; and
- providing classification information concerning classification of anomalies of the surface, said providing comprising processing the detector output with a first threshold, and classifying the anomalies in a first classification;

wherein the analyzing and classifying analyzes the detector output and uses the classification information to arrive at at least one classification of the anomalies, said analyzing and classifying also analyzing the output with a second threshold different from the first threshold, said providing including applying algorithm(s) to test relationship between the anomalies, if any, wherein said analyzing and classifying analyze the detector output with a second threshold without applying the algorithm(s) to test relationship between anomalies.

73-74. cancelled.

75. (Currently Amended) The method of claim ~~72~~74, said analyzing and classifying comprising using the first classification and the output analyzed with a second threshold to characterize anomalies in the detector output analyzed with a second threshold.

76. (New) A method for detecting and classifying anomalies of a surface of a sample of a material suitable for use as a substrate for storage, display or electronic devices, comprising:

supplying a beam of radiation to an area of the surface;

causing relative motion between the surface and the beam so that the beam traces a spiral path on the surface;

detecting radiation from the anomalies associated with the area of the surface to provide an output corresponding to the area by means of a detector; and

analyzing the detector output for anomalies and classifying the anomalies;

wherein the analyzing uses more than one threshold to analyze the detector output and to arrive at least one classification of the anomalies.

77. (New) The method of claim 76, said analyzing and classifying comprising processing the output with a first threshold, and classifying the anomalies in a first classification and analyzing the output with a second threshold different from the first threshold.

78. (New) The method of claim 77, wherein the processing of the output with the first threshold and the analyzing of the output with a second threshold are performed independently of one another.

79. (New) The method of claim 78, said analyzing and classifying comprising using the first classification and the output analyzed with a second threshold to characterize anomalies in the output analyzed with a second threshold.

80. (New) The method of claim 76, said analyzing and classifying comprising characterizing anomalies in the at least one classification as elongated anomalies, area anomalies or point anomalies.

81. (New) The method of claim 80, wherein the elongated anomalies include macroscratches and-microscratches.

82. (New) The method of claim 77, wherein the first threshold is lower than the second threshold, wherein one or more anomalies are classified as scratches when they are classified as scratches at the first threshold whether or not they are classified as scratches at the second threshold.

83. (New) The method of claim 76, wherein the analyzing is performed by means of a processing system and wherein a first threshold used in analyzing anomalies is the lowest practical threshold of the system.

84. (New) The method of claim 77, further comprising displaying only anomalies of sizes that result in detector outputs that exceed the second threshold.

85. (New) The method of claim 76, further comprising displaying only anomalies of sizes that exceed a predetermined value.

86. (New) The method of claim 76, wherein said classifying classifies the anomalies by means of their distribution over the surface.

87. (New) The method of claim 86, wherein said classifying classifies the anomalies detected into two or more of the following three categories: elongated group of anomalies, area group of anomalies or point group of anomalies.

88. (New) The method of claim 87, wherein the elongated group of anomalies comprise macroscratches and microscratches.

89. (New) The method of claim 86, wherein said classifying comprises determining distances between the anomalies detected and grouping into groups the anomalies detected that are within a predetermined distance from one another.

90. (New) The method of claim 89, wherein said classifying classifies the anomalies detected by grouping anomalies into a group only when the number of anomalies in the group exceeds a preset value.

91. (New) The method of claim 89, wherein said determining also determines length and width of a boundary on the surface enclosing at least one group of anomalies detected, and said classifying classifies the anomalies in said at least one group as those forming an elongated group when ratio of the length to the width of the boundary exceeds a preset value, and classifies the anomalies in said at least one group as those forming an area group when ratio of the length to the width of the boundary does not exceed a preset value.

92. (New) The method of claim 91, wherein said classifying classifies the anomalies in an elongated group as those forming a microscratch when the length of the boundary is greater than a preset value.

93. (New) The method of claim 86, wherein said classifying classifies the anomalies in a group as point group of anomalies when the number of anomalies in the group does not exceed a preset value.

94. (New) The method of claim 76, wherein said supplying comprises directing a beam of radiation along a direction to the surface.

95. (New) The method of claim 94, wherein said detecting detects radiation scattered by the anomalies.

96. (New) The method of claim 95, wherein said detecting detects radiation scattered by the anomalies along a direction away from a specular reflection direction of the beam by the surface.

97. (New) The method of claim 76, further comprising controlling a sample processing parameter in response to the at least one classification.

98. (New) A method for detecting and classifying anomalies of a surface of a sample of a material suitable for use as a substrate for storage, display or electronic devices, comprising:

- supplying a beam of radiation to an area of the surface;
- causing relative motion between the surface and the beam so that the beam traces a spiral path on the surface;
- detecting radiation from the anomalies associated with the area of the surface to provide an output corresponding to the area by means of a detector;
- analyzing the detector output for anomalies and classifying the anomalies; and
- providing classification information concerning classification of anomalies of the surface;

wherein the analyzing and classifying analyzes the detector output and uses the classification information to arrive at at least one classification of the anomalies.

99. (New) The method of claim 98, said providing comprising processing the detector output with a first threshold, and classifying the anomalies in a first classification, and said analyzing and classifying analyzing the output with a second threshold different from the first threshold.

100. (New) The method of claim 99, said providing including applying algorithm(s) to test relationship between the anomalies, if any, wherein said analyzing and classifying

analyze the detector output with a second threshold without applying the algorithm(s) to test relationship between anomalies.

101. (New) The method of claim 100, said analyzing and classifying comprising using the first classification and the output analyzed with a second threshold to characterize anomalies in the detector output analyzed with a second threshold.

102. (New) A method for detecting and classifying anomalies of a surface of a sample of a material suitable for use as a substrate for storage, display or electronic devices, comprising:

- supplying beam of radiation to an area of the surface;
- causing relative motion between the surface and the beam so that the beam traces paths on the surface having lengths that are smaller than dimensions of the surface, said paths substantially covering the entire surface;
- detecting radiation from the anomalies associated with the area of the surface to provide an output corresponding to the area by means of a detector; and
- analyzing the detector output for anomalies and classifying the anomalies;
- wherein the analyzing uses more than one threshold to analyze the detector output and to arrive at least one classification of the anomalies.

103. (New) The method of claim 102, said analyzing and classifying comprising processing the output with a first threshold, and classifying the anomalies in a first classification and analyzing the output with a second threshold different from the first threshold.

104. (New) The method of claim 103, wherein the processing of the output with the first threshold and the analyzing of the output with a second threshold are performed independently of one another.

105. (New) The method of claim 104, said analyzing and classifying comprising using the first classification and the output analyzed with a second threshold to characterize anomalies in the output analyzed with a second threshold.

106. (New) The method of claim 102, said analyzing and classifying comprising characterizing anomalies in the at least one classification as elongated anomalies, area anomalies or point anomalies.

107. (New) The method of claim 106, wherein the elongated anomalies include macroscratches and-microscratches.

108. (New) The method of claim 102, wherein the first threshold is lower than the second threshold, wherein one or more anomalies are classified as scratches when they are classified as scratches at the first threshold whether or not they are classified as scratches at the second threshold.

109. (New) The method of claim 102, wherein the analyzing is performed by means of a processing system and wherein a first threshold used in analyzing anomalies is the lowest practical threshold of the system.

110. (New) The method of claim 102, further comprising displaying only anomalies of sizes that result in detector outputs that exceed the second threshold.

111. (New) The method of claim 102, further comprising displaying only anomalies of sizes that exceed a predetermined value.

112. (New) The method of claim 102, wherein said classifying classifies the anomalies by means of their distribution over the surface.

113. (New) The method of claim 112, wherein said classifying classifies the anomalies detected into two or more of the following three categories: elongated group of anomalies, area group of anomalies or point group of anomalies.

114. (New) The method of claim 113, wherein the elongated group of anomalies comprise macroscratches and microscratches.

115. (New) The method of claim 112, wherein said classifying comprises determining distances between the anomalies detected and grouping into groups the anomalies detected that are within a predetermined distance from one another.

116. (New) The method of claim 115, wherein said classifying classifies the anomalies detected by grouping anomalies into a group only when the number of anomalies in the group exceeds a preset value.

117. (New) The method of claim 115, wherein said determining also determines length and width of a boundary on the surface enclosing at least one group of anomalies detected, and said classifying classifies the anomalies in said at least one group as those forming an elongated group when ratio of the length to the width of the boundary exceeds a preset value, and classifies the anomalies in said at least one group as those forming an area group when ratio of the length to the width of the boundary does not exceed a preset value.

118. (New) The method of claim 117, wherein said classifying classifies the anomalies in an elongated group as those forming a microscratch when the length of the boundary is greater than a preset value.

119. (New) The method of claim 112, wherein said classifying classifies the anomalies in a group as point group of anomalies when the number of anomalies in the group does not exceed a preset value.

120. (New) The method of claim 102, wherein said supplying comprises directing a beam of radiation along a direction to the surface.

121. (New) The method of claim 120, wherein said detecting detects radiation scattered by the anomalies.

122. (New) The method of claim 121, wherein said detecting detects radiation scattered by the anomalies along a direction away from a specular reflection direction of the beam by the surface.

123. (New) The method of claim 102, further comprising controlling a sample processing parameter in response to the at least one classification.

124. (New) A method for detecting and classifying anomalies of a surface of a sample of a material suitable for use as a substrate for storage, display or electronic devices, comprising:

- supplying a beam of radiation to an area of the surface;
- causing relative motion between the surface and the beam so that the beam traces paths on the surface having lengths that are smaller than dimensions of the surface, said paths substantially covering the entire surface;
- detecting radiation from the anomalies associated with the area of the surface to provide an output corresponding to the area by means of a detector;
- analyzing the detector output for anomalies and classifying the anomalies; and
- providing classification information concerning classification of anomalies of the surface;

wherein the analyzing and classifying analyzes the detector output and uses the classification information to arrive at at least one classification of the anomalies.

125. (New) The method of claim 124, said providing comprising processing the detector output with a first threshold, and classifying the anomalies in a first

classification, and said analyzing and classifying analyzing the output with a second threshold different from the first threshold.

126. (New) The method of claim 125, said providing including applying algorithm(s) to test relationship between the anomalies, if any, wherein said analyzing and classifying analyze the detector output with a second threshold without applying the algorithm(s) to test relationship between anomalies.

127. (New) The method of claim 126, said analyzing and classifying comprising using the first classification and the output analyzed with a second threshold to characterize anomalies in the detector output analyzed with a second threshold.